

SRI AUROBINDO
AND
INDIAN FREEDOM

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SALUTATION*

*Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee !
O friend, my country's friend, O voice incarnate, free,
Of India's soul !—No soft renown has ever crowned thy lot;
Nor pelf nor careless comfort was for thee; thou hast sought
No petty bounty's boon; the beggar's dismal bowl
Thou never hast extended. For thy wakeful soul
Aspired to heights of bondless full perfection's birth,
For which all day and night the God in man on earth
Divinely strives—the glory which with solemn voice
The poet sings in high-winged rhythms—for which rejoice
Stout hearts to march on perilous paths—before whose flame
Of danger ease bows down its head in humble shame
And death forgets to fear.*

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*When I behold thy face 'mid bondage, pain and wrong
And black indignities, I hear the soul's great song
Of rapture unconfined, the chant the pilgrim sings
In which exultant Hope's immortal music rings,
O calm and solemn voice, voice heart-consoling, grand*

* Lines from a poem composed by Rabindranath Tagore in 1908 and translated by Kshitish Chandra Sen and Dilip Kumar Roy.

*And imperturbable, the Spirit of Bharat-land,
O poet, has placed upon thy face her eyes afire
With love and struck vast chords upon her vibrant lyre,
Wherein there is no voice of sorrow, shame or fear
Nor penury nor want. And so, today, I hear
The oceans' restless roar borne by the stormy wind,
The impetuous torrent's dance riotous and swift and blind
Disdaining walls of rock: the voice of thunder deep
Awakening with its giant call the clouds of Sleep.
Amid this song of triumph vast encircling me,
Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee !*

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In preparing this little book the author has made free use of the articles he contributed to the issues of the *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, Calcutta, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Allahabad Edition) and *Swatantra*, Madras, which came out on the 15th of August, 1947, the birthday of Indian independence. Grateful acknowledgements are, therefore, due to the Editors of these journals. The subject-matter has been thoroughly revised, rewritten and enlarged.

A WORD ABOUT THE MOTHER

THE book has acquired a special significance by the addition of the Mother's Message and Invocation and Sri Aurobindo's Declaration and Message. These have not only a direct bearing on its central theme but go beyond it and serve as a beacon-light of hope and guidance to the nation struggling in the midst of rocks and shoals to steer its way to the haven of ultimate victory.

What place, it may be asked, has the Mother in Sri Aurobindo's work for India's uplift? A simple answer is that by divine direction the Mother was led to India and then almost immediately drawn to the work for India and the world, already initiated and carried on by Sri Aurobindo on his particular plane of activity. She was drawn also by the marked identity of her own aims, ideas, ideals and methods with those of Sri Aurobindo. In fact, they had

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been pursuing their work on the same line before they actually met each other.

As long ago as 1912—two years before she met Sri Aurobindo—the Mother had drawn up a plan of work (now forming the Foreword to her book *Words of the Mother*) which has a striking correspondence with Sri Aurobindo's conceptions. The earlier part of *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*—that beautiful gem of spiritual literature—written in 1912, also shows exactly the same trend.

The Mother came to Pondicherry in 1914 and at once recognised in Sri Aurobindo the one of whom she had repeated visions while in France. She also realised at the same time that her work was by his side and that India was her spiritual home, her true motherland, the centre of her wider activities for the whole world.

Identified with the soul of India, one with Bharata-Shakti, the Mother has been working with Sri Aurobindo in her infallible spiritual way for an all-round uplift of this ancient

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nation as a step towards the fulfilment of its high mission in the world.

She is the Mother whose Love bears and nourishes, creates and promotes, guards and protects, counsels and consoles; because she understands all, she supports all, excuses and pardons all, plans and prepares all: and all these, for she is the compassionate Mother of man, his supreme Liberator.

The Mother stands as the fount and focal point of the divine forces that are always at work giving shape to the new World of Tomorrow. She is the Bringer of the Light whose manifestation on earth will change the imperfect nature of man into the perfect Nature of the Divine. And it is she who prepares man for that high destiny and leads him to its attainment as the ultimate end of his terrestrial existence. This is the meaning of the Mother's advent today when man has to be helped up to the next higher stage in his evolution, the present one having reached its acme through the mastery of all the powers his mind was capable of.

Thus is being built up in the nescience of matter a godlike life—man growing into an Infinite Existence, an Infinite Knowledge, an Infinite Bliss. For the new Light that the Mother is bringing upon the earth is the Light of the Supermind, the creative Power of Sachchidānanda, which is descending into Matter to evolve out of the mental man the supramental being.

“This supramental change”, says Sri Aurobindo, “is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness; for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit. But that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is needed the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above.”* What is the role of the Mother here? As the Mediating Force. Says Sri Aurobindo: “The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and

* *The Mother*, pp. 83-84

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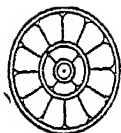
power of the Divine Mother. The Mother's power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda."¹

Obviously, therefore, the messages of the Mother and the Master are more than a human expression of mind or imagination. They are communications from higher planes of consciousness embodying the Creative Word whose inherent force will work itself out, whether we will it or not. For, the Mother says:

“A new light shall break upon the earth,
A new world shall be born,
And all things that were announced shall
be fulfilled.”²

¹ *The Mother*, pp. 84-85

² *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, p. 194



A MESSAGE *

A proposal has been made for the solution of our difficulties in organising Indian independence and it is being accepted with whatever bitterness of regret and searchings of the heart by Indian leaders.

But do you know why this proposal has been made to us? It is to prove to us the absurdity of our quarrels.

And do you know why we have to accept these proposals? It is to prove to ourselves the absurdity of our quarrels.

* This is the word that came to the Mother when she heard on the Radio the declaration of June 2, 1947 issued by the Viceroy to the leaders of Indian parties.

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Clearly, this is not a solution; it is a test, an ordeal which, if we live it out in all sincerity, will prove to us that it is not by cutting a country into small bits that we shall bring about its unity and its greatness; it is not by opposing interests against each other that we can win for it prosperity; it is not by setting one dogma against another that we can serve the spirit of Truth. In spite of all, India has a single soul and while we have to wait till we can speak of an India one and indivisible, our cry must be:

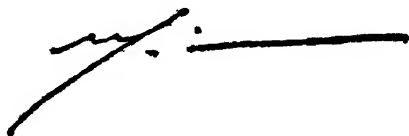
Let the soul of India live for ever!

The Mother

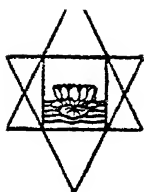
June 3, 1947

INVOCATION

O our Mother, O Soul of India, Mother who hast never forsaken thy children even in the days of darkest depression, even when they turned away from thy voice, served other Masters and denied thee, now when they have arisen and the light is on thy face in this dawn of thy liberation, in this great hour we salute thee. Guide us so that the horizon of freedom opening before us may be also a horizon of true greatness and of thy true life in the community of the nations. Guide us so that we may be always on the side of great ideals and show to men thy true visage, as a leader in the ways of the spirit and a friend and helper of all the peoples.



August 15, 1947



THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST 1947

AUGUST 15th is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But it has a significance not only for us, but for Asia and the whole world; for it signifies the entry into the comity of nations of a new power with untold potentialities which has a great part to play in determining the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity. To me personally it must naturally be gratifying that this date which was notable only for me because it was my own birthday celebrated annually by those who have accepted my gospel of life, should have acquired this vast significance. As a mystic, I take this identification, not as a coin-

cidence or fortuitous accident, but as a sanction and seal of the Divine Power which guides my steps on the work with which I began life. Indeed almost all the world movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though at that time they looked like impossible dreams, I can observe on this day either approaching fruition or initiated and on the way to their achievement.

I have been asked for a message on this great occasion, but I am perhaps hardly in a position to give one. All I can do is to make a personal declaration of the aims and ideals conceived in my childhood and youth and now watched in their beginning of fulfilment, because they are relevant to the freedom of India, since they are a part of what I believe to be India's future work, something in which she cannot but take a leading position. For I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power and prosperity,—though these too she must not neglect,—and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other

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peoples, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race. Those aims and ideals were in their natural order these: a revolution which would achieve India's freedom and her unity; the resurgence and liberation of Asia and her return to the great role which she had played in the progress of human civilisation; the rise of a new, a greater, brighter and nobler life for mankind which for its entire realisation would rest outwardly on an international unification of the separate existence of the peoples, preserving and securing their national life but drawing them together into an overriding and consummating oneness; the gift by India of her spiritual knowledge and her means for the spiritualisation of life to the whole race; finally, a new step in the evolution which, by uplifting the consciousness to a higher level, would begin the solution of the many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity, since men began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society.

India is free but she has not achieved unity, only a fissured and broken freedom. At one time it almost seemed as if she might relapse into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. Fortunately there has now developed a strong possibility that this disastrous relapse will be avoided. The wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly makes it possible that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindu and Muslim seems to have hardened into the figure of a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that the Congress and the nation will not accept the settled fact as for ever settled or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. The partition of the country must go,—it is to be hoped by a slackening of tension, by a progressive understanding of the need of peace and concord, by the constant necessity of common and concerted action,

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even of an instrument of union for that purpose. In this way unity may come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, the division must and will go. For without it the destiny of India might be seriously impaired and even frustrated. But that must not be.

Asia has arisen and large parts of it have been liberated or are at this moment being liberated; its other still subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

The unification of mankind is under way, though only in an imperfect initiative, organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and, if the experience of history can be taken as a

guide, it must inevitably increase until it conquers. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For in any case the unification is a necessity in the course of Nature, an inevitable movement and its achievement can be safely foretold. Its necessity for the nations also is clear, for without it the freedom of the small peoples can never be safe hereafter and even large and powerful nations cannot really be secure. India, if she remains divided, will not herself be sure of her safety. It is therefore to the interest of all that union should take place. Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness could prevent it. Against that, it has been said, even the gods strive in vain; but it cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine

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Will. Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions; even it may be such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship and a voluntary fusion of cultures may appear in the process of the change and the spirit of nationalism losing its militancy may find these things perfectly compatible with the integrity of its own outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

The spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The rest is still a personal hope and an idea and ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking

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minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must come through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far or how soon this connection will be fulfilled, depends upon this new and free India.

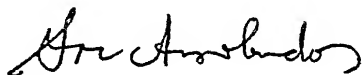
Sri Aurobindo

15th August, 1947

A MESSAGE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

*(Given in answer to the request of the All-India
Radio, Trichinopoly)*

I WOULD have preferred silence in the face of these circumstances that surround us. For any words we can find fall flat amid such happenings. This much, however, I will say that the Light which led us to freedom, though not yet to unity, still burns and will burn on till it conquers. I believe firmly that a great and united future is the destiny of this nation and its peoples. The Power that brought us through so much struggle and suffering to freedom, will achieve also, through whatever strife or trouble, the aim which so poignantly occupied the thoughts of the fallen leader at the time of his tragic ending; as it brought us freedom, it will bring us unity. A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and united people.



February 5, 1948

SRI AUROBINDO AND INDIAN FREEDOM*

"Long after this controversy is hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, Aurobindo will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and as the lover of humanity ...his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India, but across distant seas and lands." (Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das in his address in the Alipore Conspiracy Case, 1909)

THE first rays of the dawn of freedom in India are visible in her skies. The children of this hoary land are breathing afresh the exhilarating air of that free life of which they were deprived for centuries. The struggle of India for

* Some views based on Sri Aurobindo's writings. The quotations in this article are, every one of them, from his following books and writings: *Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda*, *Speeches of Aurobindo Ghose*, *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Life Divine*, *The Mother*,

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her political independence has ended in a glorious victory. But the task ahead of building up a new India is a tremendous one requiring the application of more than the utmost normal capacities of the race. The endeavour therefore must be made to reconstruct the national life on the basis of India's own culture, the truth of her soul and the purpose of her existence.

Indeed the free India of today is not at all what she is destined to be. Her territorial integrity, her political oneness is vitally necessary for her growth as a nation as well as for the accomplishment of her mission in the world. Verily it is for this particular work that she has lived through the ages. A resurgent India, a strong, united and above all, an illumined India able powerfully to revolutionise

The Renaissance in India, The Bandemataram, The Karmayogin, Dharma (Bengali weekly), *Sri Aurobindar Patra* (Letters in Bengali), *Kara-kahini* (Jail experiences in Bengali), *Sri Aurobindo* (Biography in English) by Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, and unpublished letters and notes of Sri Aurobindo.

the consciousness of the entire world and shape it anew by her own illimitable spiritual force is the hope and need of humanity today. That will be the noontide of her freedom, the high watermark of her greatness and her supreme *raison d'être* among the peoples of the world.

The last century witnessed in India the birth of men who, with the movements that go in their names, were at once the promise and precursors of a glorious future for the country. They made the pioneer attempts to win back for India whatever she had lost during her long period of decline. But very little of a definite nature was then done towards the political uplift of the people. It was about the close of the last century and the beginning of the present that a few rare sons of India felt within them the pangs of her subjection and strove for the attainment of her freedom so that she might fulfil herself both as a nation and as the spiritual leader of mankind. But the movement was not a mere political one. There was a deeper side to it, which must be

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understood if a proper appraisal is to be made of that movement, and without which the true intention, the exact truth of India's struggle for freedom will remain an undiscovered secret.

Of the two forces that in the last century proved most effective in the individual and collective life of Europe, one was the French Revolution and the other was the Scientific Materialism. It was an age when the marvellous achievements of Science made the individual conscious of his powers and potentialities and when the great ideals of revolutionary France roused the collectivity to a sense of its rights and responsibilities. These influences were not confined to Europe only. The mind of Asia apparently inclined to conservatism, did not take long to imbibe them and with them, Western ideas of democracy, freedom and nationalism. In India their impact created conditions that helped to rekindle the lamp of her soul, to resuscitate the collective life of her people. The inward bent of their mind opened the eyes of the inaugurators of this movement not only to the puissance

and capacity of India's intellect and heart but also to her inborn spiritual genius and the magnificent treasures of her past. It was this latter fact—the rediscovery of the eternal truths seen by the ancient fathers—that made Vivekananda declare that India has a work to do for the spiritual liberation of man and that she must arise and conquer the world by the power of her soul. The Swami's was indeed a voice that spoke in the accents of the gods. It stirred the country to its inmost depths and gave a rude shaking to the Leviathan that had been sleeping so long.

The Leviathan woke up, and signs of a new awakening began to be perceptible in every realm of national life. As their knowledge of the past increased and deepened, the children of the Mother felt impelled from within to reinstall her in her rightful place in the world as the Gracious Mother of man whom she would emancipate from darkness, discord and suffering by the light of her aeonian wisdom. But the fact was also there that India could not fulfil this aim so long as

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she was in bondage. She had to be free, free in every sense of the term, that is to say, an Indian must be 'free in India as an Englishman is free in England.' More than that. This freedom she needs not that she might develop and prosper materially only as Europe or America, but that she might be great again in the Spirit so as to be able to deliver her message to humanity and lead it to its divine goal. This is the deeper meaning of India's struggle for her political independence.

It was Bankim Chandra Chatterji who first saw the vision of Mother India, the Mother as she had been in her glorious past, as she was in her state of subjection, as she would be in her even more glorious future, and in an inspired moment uttered the *mantra* of an awakened nationalism. Bande Mataram soon became the *mantra* of power by which the Mother was invoked, and the Mother poured her shakti into her children and fired them with a burning desire to dedicate themselves to the cause of their country's freedom. Sri Aurobindo called Bankim a Rishi, a seer, and revealed to the

country the truth of the *mantra*. He wrote: "The *mantra* had been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism. The Mother had revealed herself. Once that vision has come to a people, there can be no rest, no peace, no further slumber till the temple has been made ready, the image installed and the sacrifice offered. A great nation which has had that vision can never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conqueror." If Bankim was the seer of the national *mantra*, Sri Aurobindo was the God-appointed high-priest and prophet of national freedom, who delivered the gospel of dynamic nationalism and chalked out the main lines of action for its growth and fulfilment.

The Shakti of India chose Bengal as her "first workshop" where she started her work by throwing out new forces and new personalities who became the makers of a new epoch, the bringers of a new dawn in every sphere of national life. Thus, "it is Bengal," wrote Sri Aurobindo in the *Arya* in 1917, "which first recovered its soul, respiritualised

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itself, forced the world to hear of its great spiritual personalities, gave it the first modern Indian poet and Indian scientist of world-wide fame and achievement, first made India begin to count again in the culture of the world, first, as a reward in the outer life, arrived at a vital political consciousness and a living political movement not imitative and derivative in its spirit and its central ideal." This political upheaval was in fact only an aspect of that vast resurgence into which the creative soul of Bengal broke itself. And from the very beginning her political striving as well as her other endeavours was nurtured and sustained by a spiritual purpose, their deeper aim, the absence of which woefully betrayed the un-Indian character of the later movements in the country. Verily did renascent Bengal grow to be the centre of manifold cultural activities which had, every one of them, a common intrinsic meaning hidden behind their external manifestations.

Most of those who were connected with the leadership of the extreme form of political

movement in Bengal were themselves devout spiritual seekers, disciples of well-known masters of the time, possessing a knowledge of the ideals and values for which India has stood through the ages. Each of them was a veritable dynamo of force and inspiration, burning with a whole-hearted love for his motherland, with an unshakable faith in her great future. The youths of Bengal gathered round them, caught the flame of their love and faith, left their hearths and homes, and dedicated themselves to the service of the Mother, to the sacred task of re-enthroning her in her own temple. This was how those pioneer-souls of Bengal imparted to India her fire-baptism of liberty. "They were called to receive God within themselves and were able to receive Him, were able to bear, to suffer and live in that Power, and by living in that Power they were able to give it out...hence you see a movement which no obstacle can stop." It was to them that the vision came of India the Mother, "the Eternal and Timeless India." It was to them that the message came of a larger life of freedom and glory. "And

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when the message came, Bengal was ready to receive it, and she received it in a single moment, and in a single moment the whole nation rose, the whole nation lifted itself out of delusions and out of despair, and it was by this sudden rising, by this sudden awakening from dream that Bengal found the way for salvation and declared to all India that eternal life, immortality and not lasting degradation, was her fate and Bengal lived in that faith." These words of Sri Aurobindo, uttered in 1908, came from his unerring perception of the inner idea that motivated the political endeavour of the time. And was it not Sri Aurobindo who reinforced that endeavour by the invincible power of the Spirit, by the supernal sublimity of his soul-utterances and, materially, by a most practical plan of political action?

But was Sri Aurobindo only an inspired evangelist, a fiery revolutionary or a mere leader of a political movement? And was liberation of India the sole objective of all his activities in those days? The life of Sri Aurobindo, as he has himself said, "has never

been on the surface for man to see." Next to nothing was known about him even when he was most active in working out his revolutionary programme. He preferred to remain and act and even to lead from behind the scenes without his name being known to the public. It was the Government's action in prosecuting him as the editor of the *Bandemataram* that forced him into the public view.

Not yet in his teens, while a student in Manchester, he used often to see visions of a new world that would be born, and of an 'age of gold' that would dawn on earth. In 1907 he wrote: "I have in me the power to accomplish the deliverance of my fallen country but it is not any physical power. It is the power of knowledge,—*Brahmatej* founded in *Jnana*. God has sent me to this world to do this work, the seed of which first germinated when I was fourteen years of age and it took a deep root in me when I was eighteen." About the same time he wrote again: "I have come to do God's work." These are thoughts

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that show the uniqueness of his personality. And his later life is a glowing illustration of it.

II

Barely a child of seven, Sri Aurobindo found himself in England where he was sent by his father for a "thorough English education." And while in India, the education that he had was in a residential European school at Darjeeling. How could one so utterly cut off from his country and its culture almost from his birth become in his youth an ardent champion of its freedom? A paradox, indeed, that baffles a student of Sri Aurobindo's life. So far as an objective explanation can be attempted, we may mention that Sri Aurobindo's father used to send him in England newspaper-cuttings from Indian papers relating the evils and indignities of British rule in India and that Sri Aurobindo evinced a keen interest in Ireland's fight for freedom, then going on, which he studied at close quarters and for which he expressed his warm admiration in some of his poems. These are, no doubt,

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ostensible factors in the growth of a patriotic fervour in his soul, which impelled him to devise ways and means for the liberation of his country.

Along with his brothers Sri Aurobindo became a member of a secret society called "Lotus and Dagger" started in London by Indian students with the sole object of freeing India from foreign rule. The society however did not live beyond its infancy. The revolutionary speeches Sri Aurobindo delivered at the Indian Majlis in Cambridge advocating drastic methods in India's struggle for independence had behind them an idea of a revolution in India that was then developing in him. These speeches were noted by India Office authorities and were one cause why they were so ready to get rid of him as a prospective member of the Indian Civil Service. Thus in England even while being "brought up amongst foreign ideas and in an atmosphere entirely foreign", Sri Aurobindo never for a moment forgot his motherland and the pangs of her subjection.

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This is how Providence had in every way been preparing him for the great work he had to do for it in the future. The mastery of the lores of the West he had gained in England and the mastery of his country's ancient wisdom he later gained in India form only the background against which this Missioned Yogi stands today holding up before the world his unique vision of a divine perfection for man. The peculiar circumstances in which he did not turn up for the Riding Test in the I.C.S. Examination had also in them the hand of the same Providence that shapes things long before they actualise on the material plane. Again, when on his return from his long fourteen years' stay in England he stepped from the ship on to Apollo Bunder in Bombay, he suddenly felt a deep calm and silence within him and without. This he realised later as the Brahmic Calm. Mother India greeting her beloved child with a Brahmic Calm! Does it not carry its own significance? Does it not mean that while receiving him back into her bosom the Mother immediately initiated him into the mystery of her soul and laid upon

him the task of rediscovering its truth and of revealing it to the world, and as a necessary preparation for that, of bringing about her political emancipation? It was therefore the Will of God that India should arise and be free and have her rightful place in the comity of nations, because only a free India could effectively speak to the world her supreme "Creative Word". And was not Sri Aurobindo the first to declare complete independence as the goal of India and give to the country a dynamic lead towards that goal?

It was in the nineties of the last century, a few years after his arrival at Baroda, that Sri Aurobindo began to give some form to his revolutionary ideas which had been growing in him from his early days in England. Freedom of his country seemed to him then to be the first consideration, and he believed that only by a revolution could it be brought about. Face to face with formidable odds, he dared to think that a movement of liberation through violent resistance and revolt becoming more and

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more general and persistent would compel the British people to yield to the Indian aspiration so as to save what they could of their empire or, in an extremity, decide to grant independence rather than have it forcibly wrested from their hands.

Sri Aurobindo made his first move when in 1900 he sent a young Bengali soldier of the Baroda army, Jatin Banerji, as his lieutenant to Bengal with a programme of preparation and action which he thought might extend over thirty years before it could fructify. As a matter of fact, it has taken nearly fifty years for the movement of freedom to arrive at the beginning of fruition and success. The idea was to carry on secretly, or so far as visible action could be taken under various cloaks and covers, revolutionary propaganda and recruiting throughout Bengal. This was to be done among the youths of the country while sympathy and support and financial and other assistance were to be obtained from older men who had advanced views or who could be won over to them. Centres were to be opened in

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every town and eventually in every village, societies of young men were to be established with various ostensible objects, cultural, intellectual or moral and those already existing were to be won over for revolutionary use. Young men were to be trained in activities which might be helpful for ultimate military action, such as riding, physical training, athletics of various kinds, drill and organised movement. The idea immediately caught on; already existing small groups and associations of young men who had not yet any clear idea or any settled programme of revolution began to turn in this direction and a few who had already a revolutionary aim were formed into secret societies for work on organised lines; the few rapidly became the many.

Sri Aurobindo's aim was to turn the whole movement into a close organisation, but it did not entirely materialise. Nevertheless the movement itself did not suffer by that, for the general idea was taken up and the activity of many separate groups led to greater and more widespread diffusion of the revolutionary idea

and its practical forms. Afterwards there came the Partition of Bengal and in its trail a general outburst of revolt which was so readily possible because of Sri Aurobindo's preparation of the ground for it, and which now favoured the rise of the Extremist Party and the great Nationalist movement. Sri Aurobindo's activities were then turned more and more in this direction and the secret action became a secondary and subordinate element. He took advantage of the Swadeshi movement to popularise the idea of violent revolt in the future. The Bengali daily paper *Yugantar* began under his guidance to preach open revolt and absolute denial of British rule and wrote series of articles giving instructions for guerilla warfare. Sri Aurobindo himself wrote in Bengali some of the opening articles in the early issues of the paper. The paper at once acquired an immense influence over the youthful minds in the province. It may be noted that the Secret Society did not include terrorism in its programme but this element grew up in Bengal as a result of the strong repression and the reaction to it in the province.

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Conditions were now favourable to the formation of the Nationalist Party of which Sri Aurobindo was a prominent leader. He was also its principal leader in action in Bengal and the organiser of its policy and strategy. He had decided in his mind the lines on which he wanted the country's action to run: what he planned was very much the same as was developed afterwards in Ireland as the Sinn Fein movement, but Sri Aurobindo, as some have represented, did not derive his ideas from Ireland, for the Irish movement came into prominence later and he knew nothing of it till after he had withdrawn to Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo had now to establish and generalise the idea of independence in the mind of the Indian people and at the same time to push first a party and then the whole nation into an intense and organised political activity which would lead to the accomplishment of that ideal. His idea was to capture the Congress and make it an instrument of revolutionary action instead of a centre of a

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cautious constitutional agitation which would only talk and pass resolutions and forward prayers, petitions and protests to the foreign Government. If the Congress would not be captured, then a central revolutionary body would have to be created which could do this work. It was to be a sort of a state within the State giving its directions to the people and creating organised bodies and institutions which would be its means of action, there would be an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance which would render the administration of the country by a foreign Government difficult and finally impossible, a universal unrest which would wear down repression and ultimately, if need be, an open revolt all over the country.

This plan included a boycott of British trade, the substitution of national schools for the Government institutions, the creation of arbitration courts to which the people could resort instead of depending on the ordinary courts of law, the creation of volunteer forces which would be the nucleus of an army of

open revolt and all other action that would make the programme complete. The idea of boycott took firm root in the country, that of national education materialised in the starting of many national schools in various parts of the country. Some districts took up the idea of people's court not without success. The volunteer groupings however had a stronger vitality. They lived on in many shapes and multiplied in number. These workers were the spearhead of the movements of direct action which broke out from time to time in the struggle for freedom. But the greatest thing done in those years was the creation of a new spirit throbbing in the hearts of young and old. In the enthusiasm that swept surging everywhere with the cry of Bande Mataram ringing on all sides, men felt it glorious to be alive and dare and act together and hope; the old apathy and timidity was broken and a force created which nothing could destroy and which rose again and again, in wave after wave, till it has carried India to the beginning of a complete victory.

III

The part Sri Aurobindo took publicly in Indian politics was of a brief duration, for he stepped aside from it in 1910 and withdrew to Pondicherry; much of his programme lapsed in his absence, but enough had been done to change the whole face of Indian politics and the whole spirit of the Indian people, to make independence its aim and non-co-operation its method, and even its imperfect application heightening into spasmodic spurts of revolt has been sufficient to bring about its victory. The course of subsequent events followed largely Sri Aurobindo's ideas. The Congress was finally captured by the Nationalist Party. It declared independence as its aim, organised itself for action, took almost the whole nation *minus* a majority of the Mohammedans and a minority of the depressed classes under its leadership with a view eventually to forming the first National independent Government in India.

Sri Aurobindo had so long been a silent

leader. His ideas were within him, known only to his co-workers and followers by the form they were given under his guidance. His only political writings during the nineties of the last century were the articles in the *Induprakash* of Bombay in which he severely criticised the Moderate politics, denouncing it outright as mere mendicancy. But they were published anonymously. His association with the *Bandemataram*—that fiery organ of dynamic nationalism—gave him an opportunity to propagate his inspiring thoughts and wonderful visions. The paper first declared its policy to be “complete autonomy, free from British control”, but Sri Aurobindo soon flung aside this too cautious and complex phrase for the single word Independence, which he was the first to declare publicly as the one goal of the Indian political movement. This was towards the end of 1906. A few months later he wrote: “A divine Power is behind the movement; the *Zeit-Geist*, the Time-Spirit, is at work to bring about a mighty movement of which the world at the present juncture has need. That movement is the resurgence of Asia and the

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resurgence of India is only a necessary part of the larger movement but its central need. India is the key-stone of the arch, the chief inheritress of the common Asiatic destiny... The idea of a free and united India has been born and arrived at full stature in the land of the Rishis, and the spiritual force of a great civilisation of which the world has need, is gathering at its back."

Love of India was to Sri Aurobindo more than a religion. For him it was a spiritual experience. He once wrote that India had never been to him what was merely suggested by her outer vestures, attractive and gorgeous though they are. She is to him the Mother, the eternal and infinite Mother, the compassionate Mother of man. "Patriotism", wrote Sri Aurobindo, "cannot be anything short of a desire to redeem one's country. It cannot bear to look upon the country as a sepulchre though it may seem so. It feels the immortality stirring beneath those ruins with which subjection has overspread the country. It feels the pulsations of the immense eternal life of

the country through the artificial crust with which the great sleeper has been covered as with a shroud."

Subjection is an evil that eats into the vitals of a nation's being, enfeebling its body, corrupting its morals, grinding and corroding its soul. It must at all costs be got rid of. It is the right of a subject people, its *dharma*, to free itself from the shackles of foreign rule. And the sooner it is done, the better. That is the only work before the country, none greater than that. "All expectation of moral regeneration which leaves freedom out of the count is a dream. First freedom, then regeneration...To recover possession of the State is therefore the first business of the awakened Indian consciousness. If this is so, then it is obvious that the political liberation of India cannot be put off to a distant date as a thing which can be worked out at leisure, with the slow pace of the snail, by creeping degrees of senile caution. It must be done now. It is the first condition of life which must be satisfied if the nation is to survive."

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Indeed freedom has a charm all its own. The very mention of it thrills the heart. And when a subject people wakes up to its light and glory, there is no knowing what method it may adopt for its liberation from the foreign yoke. And no sacrifice is too great for it for the fulfilment of this aim. Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Bandemataram*: "Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation. Without it a nation cannot grow, cannot expand... The work of national emancipation is a great and holy *yajna* of which boycott, Swadeshi, national education and every other activity, great and small, are only major and minor parts. Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice, and Motherland, the goddess to whom we offer it; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the *yajna* we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest; for the Motherland is the goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the gods by a grudging giver."

IV

When in 1906 Dadabhai Naoroji, as President of the Calcutta Congress, first used the word Swaraj to mean colonial self-government, Sri Aurobindo's immediate reaction was to declare openly for complete and absolute independence as the aim of political action in India. He was the first of India's politicians who had the courage to declare this in public, and from 1906 onwards he insisted on this ideal persistently in the pages of the *Bandemataram*, and he evoked immediate response from his countrymen. The Congress under Nationalist leadership adopted it in its Karachi session only in 1931. And as the means to the attainment of this end, the *Bandemataram* declared and developed a new political programme for the country as the programme of the Nationalist Party, including all the items of Sri Aurobindo's plan already stated.

Sri Aurobindo wrote a series of articles on passive resistance, developing the political

philosophy of revolution. He also wrote many articles aimed at destroying the shibboleths and superstitions of the Moderate Party, such as their belief in British justice and the benefit bestowed by a foreign government on India, their faith in British law courts and in the adequacy of education given in schools and universities in India, and stressed, more powerfully and persistently than had ever been done, the emasculation, stagnation, slow progress, poverty, economic dependence, absence of rich industrial activity and many other evil results of a foreign government. He insisted specially that even if an alien rule were benevolent and beneficent, it could never be a substitute for a free and healthy national life. Assisted by this publicity, the ideas of the Nationalists gained ground everywhere, especially in Bengal and the Punjab, which had so long been predominantly moderate. The *Bandemataram* was almost unique in journalistic history in the influence it exercised in converting the mind of a people and preparing it for revolution.

But this was not his only work. During these years Sri Aurobindo was tirelessly active in his inner life, trying to explore newer paths to the supreme illumination. And this did not mean that his outer activities were a thing apart from his inner life. On the contrary, his outer activities were but the practical forms of his inly-realised truths. His thoughts and visions of the higher worlds of Light translated themselves into his work for the rehabilitation of his country's freedom and greatness. He felt that India must be free so that he could do his spiritual work for her. All his activities, inward or outward, sprang from this conviction, and led towards the fulfilment of the deeper aim of his life.

After the well-known Surat debacle Sri Aurobindo met at Baroda the Maharashtra yogi, Lele, and had from him some guidance in yoga. The first result was a complete silence in the mind brought about in three days. An emptiness overwhelmed him, so much so that he might be unable to deliver a pre-

arranged lecture at Bombay. But under the instructions of Lele he stood before the audience in that empty state of his mind and lo and behold! there flowed from him a regular stream of words, words of power and light that kept the audience spell-bound. This silence has since remained in him and whatever he has written and said has all come direct from the higher planes of wisdom covered by the great Silence. It was in that meeting that Sri Aurobindo made the memorable utterance: "Nationalism is a religion that has come from God...It has not been crushed. It is not going to be crushed. Nationalism survives in the strength of God and it is not possible to crush it, whatever weapons are brought against it. Nationalism is immortal; nationalism cannot die, because it is no human thing; it is God who is working in Bengal."

The Government was then pursuing a policy of ruthless repression in order to suppress all Nationalist activities in Bengal. On his return to Calcutta Sri Aurobindo reiterated in the *Bandemataram*: "Nationalism is itself no crea-

tion of individuals and can have no respect for persons. It is a force which God has created, and from Him it has received only one command, to advance and advance and ever advance until He bids it stop, because its appointed mission is done...Nationalism is an Avatara and cannot be slain. Nationalism is a divinely appointed shakti of the Eternal and must do its God-given work before it returns to the bosom of the Universal Energy from which it came."

It was of this new and dynamic religion of nationalism that Sri Aurobindo was the inspired prophet and high-priest, whose mission was first to prepare the country for political freedom and then lead her to her great destiny of being the spiritual guide and teacher of the world by himself bringing down from heaven a new light for man which will liberate him into a higher life, a diviner perfection. He wrote: "India is the Guru of the nations, the physician of the human soul in its profounder maladies. She is destined once more to remould the life of the world and restore

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the peace of the human spirit. And Swaraj is the necessary condition of her work and before she can do the work, she must fulfil the condition."

V

Sri Aurobindo has always felt that the movement of India's freedom was being guided by an Unseen Power and that she was bound to be free. He also knew that 'India has a secret Power which no other nation possesses.' And that 'Our political beginning will have a religious end.' The change in his inner life which had already started was deepening in him when he was arrested and kept for some time in a solitary cell and subsequently in jail during his trial. His days in jail were days of an intense spiritual sadhana, even though the conditions there were not at all favourable to such pursuits. In that Ashram, as he called the jail, he had visions, experiences and realisations down even to *kayasiddhi* in the sense of a mastery over the physical, and what is more, he rose to higher planes of consciousness and received from there hints and intimations.

of his future lines of work. There in jail he saw Sri Krishna everywhere and in everything. He felt in him and about him the presence of Vasudeva, his 'Friend and Lover'. Sri Aurobindo was not at all concerned about the prosecution, because he had been assured from within and knew that he would be acquitted. During this period his view of life underwent a radical change. He had taken up Yoga with the original idea of acquiring spiritual force and energy and divine guidance for the work of his life. But now the inner spiritual life and realisation, which had continually been increasing in magnitude and universality and assuming larger and higher proportions, took him up entirely and his work became a part and result of it and besides far exceeded and overtopped the motives of service and liberation of the country and fixed itself in an aim—previously only glimpsed—which was world-wide in its bearing and concerned the whole future of humanity.

But as a matter of fact, coming out of jail Sri Aurobindo resumed his political activity.

He was determined to continue the struggle. He held meetings in Calcutta and went out to places in the districts to speak. He started two journals, one in Bengali called *Dharma*, and the other in English called the *Karmayogin*, in both of which he re-emphasised his ideas with a greater force and from a newer angle of vision. He wrote in the *Karmayogin*: "The problems which have troubled mankind can only be solved by conquering the kingdom within, not by harnessing the forces of Nature to the service of comfort and luxury, but by mastering the forces of intellect and the spirit, by vindicating the freedom of man within as well as without and by conquering from within external Nature. For that work the resurgence of Asia is necessary, therefore Asia rises. For that work the freedom and greatness, of India is essential; therefore she claims her destined freedom and greatness, and it is to the interest of humanity, not excluding England, that she should wholly establish her claim."

Sri Aurobindo now felt even more deeply than before that a higher Will was fulfilling

itself in the striving of India for the recovery of her freedom and greatness and that he himself was an instrument of that Will. In fact, after his return from jail he was always in a state of complete surrender to the Divine Will. He said in his Uttarpara Speech: "I knew all along what He meant for me, for I heard it again and again, always I listened to the voice within, 'I am guiding, therefore, fear not. Turn to your own work for which I have brought you to jail and when you come out, remember never to fear, never to hesitate. Remember that it is I who am doing this, not you nor any other....I am in the nation and its uprising and I am Vasudeva, I am Narayana, and what I will, shall be, not what others will. What I choose to bring about, no human power can stay.'"

We may state here a fact that is not generally known—a fact more or less of subjective experience felt by some of those who attended the above-mentioned meeting at Uttarpara. In the nature of things, what the audience expected was a weighty political pronouncement

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from their beloved leader, just released from a long detention and a historic trial. Instead what did they see? Sri Aurobindo spoke no doubt in his usual calm, clear-cut, measured accents. But why in another vein, in another language, with a different trend? Was it Aurobindo that was speaking, the same familiar intellectual and political leader of trenchant views?—they wondered. Presently they felt a new atmosphere, an exalting influence, a strange stirring in their souls, a heightening of their being as they heard the divine names Narayana, Vasudeva, Sri Krishna, fall from his lips in clear ringing notes. Nay more. They saw an unusual light on the face of Sri Aurobindo. They sensed the presence of Sri Krishna. Altogether it was a unique, a thrilling experience, they averred.

From now his speeches, writings and personal talks began to show that Sri Aurobindo's career had taken a different turn. He stated his realisation when he said that the leadership of the national movement had been taken up by the Divine Himself and that the

work assigned to him was no longer political but spiritual. He wrote in the *Karmayogin*: "We believe that God is with us and in that faith we shall conquer. We believe that humanity needs us, and it is the love and service of humanity, of our country, of the race, of our religion that will purify our heart and inspire our action in the struggle. The task we set before ourselves is not mechanical but moral and spiritual. We aim not at the alteration of a form of government but at the building up of a nation. Of that task politics is a part, but only a part. We shall devote ourselves not to politics alone, nor to social questions alone, nor to theology or philosophy or literature or science by themselves, but we include all these in one entity which we believe to be all-important, the *dharma*, the national religion which we also believe to be universal. There is a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of which India has always been destined to be guardian, exemplar and missionary. This is the eternal religion."

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That is why Sri Aurobindo called upon his countrymen to rediscover and repossess that priceless heritage and on that to build the greater India of tomorrow. "First therefore become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan discipline, the Aryan character, the Aryan life.¹ Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga. Recover them not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives. Live them and you will be great and strong, mighty, invincible and fearless...For it is in the spirit that strength is eternal, and you must win back the kingdom of yourselves, the inner Swaraj, before you can win back your outer empire. There the Mother dwells and She waits for worship that She may give strength. Believe in Her, serve Her, lose your wills in Hers, your egoism in the greater ego of the country, your separate selfishness in the service of hu-

¹ Sri Aurobindo's exposition of his idea of a true Aryan published in the *Arya*, 1914, has been reprinted in his *Views and Reviews*, extracts from which are given in the Appendix.

manity. Recover the source of all strength in yourselves and all else will be added to you, social soundness, intellectual pre-eminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought, the hegemony of the world." Yes, social soundness, intellectual pre-eminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought, the hegemony of the world, India in the making and India to be must have but not for domination of other peoples, as Sri Aurobindo has made clear in his Fifteenth August (1947) Declaration, but "to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race."

These however are words that clearly show how more and more inwards Sri Aurobindo was tending. The conviction was growing upon him that the new India of the future could not be built on political freedom only. The race must awaken to its spiritual possibilities, to a profounder sense of its soul-fulfilment, for out of that knowledge alone can come the true vision and force by which the future can be securely built and India can rise again to the

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pinnacle of her glory. In 1922 Sri Aurobindo wrote that he believed in a higher spiritual force as the one thing indispensable—the one thing that must be made active for the realisation of India's freedom and greatness.

It was about this time (1909) that the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had come to sight and Diarchy appeared on the scene. In this Sri Aurobindo discerned a development which he had always foreseen, the turn of Britain towards a more real movement of conciliation and concession in place of the mock reforms hitherto offered. Up till now the motto of action for the Nationalist movement maintained by Sri Aurobindo had been "No Compromise" and its method as complete a non-co-operation as possible. But now to meet this change in the attitude of the Government he modified his formula. He wrote in an open letter to his countrymen, his last will and testament: "The policy of passive resistance was evolved partly as the necessary complement of self-help, partly as a means of putting pressure on the Government. The

essence of this policy is the refusal of co-operation as long as we are not admitted to a substantial share and an effective control in legislation, finance and administration. Just as "No representation, no taxation" was the watchword of American constitutional agitation in the eighteenth century, so "No control, no co-operation" should be the watchword of our lawful agitation—for constitution we have none,—in the twentieth. We sum up this refusal of co-operation in the convenient word "Boycott", refusal of co-operation in the industrial exploitation of our country, in education, in government, in judicial administration, in the details of official intercourse."

As regards the ideal of the Congress, Sri Aurobindo repeated in the same letter his conviction with which he had started his political life. "Our ideal is that of Swaraj or absolute autonomy free from British control. We claim the right of every nation to live its own life by its own energies according to its own nature and ideals. We reject the claim of aliens to force upon us a civilisation inferior to our

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own or to keep us out of our inheritance on the untenable ground of a superior fitness... The Swaraj matter can easily be settled by the substitution of "full and complete self-government" for "self-government on colonial lines" (the Moderate ideal) in the Swaraj resolution of the Congress."

Meanwhile the British Government were hatching all sorts of plans either to deport Sri Aurobindo or to confine him in jail. Friends advised him to leave Bengal and carry on his work from outside. The trends of his inner life too were in favour of his withdrawal from active politics so that he could devote himself exclusively to that other work of his life, the work for the spiritual uplift of India and through it of humanity. The Command from above came that he should go to Chander-nagar and thence to Pondicherry. He was at that time certain that India would be free. In January 1910, in the course of an interview to a representative of *India*, a Tamil nationalist weekly, Sri Aurobindo predicted that after a long period of wars, world-wide upheavals and

revolutions which were to begin in about four years, India would achieve her freedom.

VI

Sri Aurobindo's life of Yoga in Pondicherry has always been a mystery to the public and, indeed, it is so. For none knows how, living in 'the vasts of God', he mastered the secret of a divine life upon earth towards the attainment of which he is to lead mankind. And is not that divine life the meaning and mission of India's chequered existence through the ages? While utterly occupied with this stupendous work, Sri Aurobindo refused more than one request to preside at the sessions of the Indian National Congress. As his vision of the future grew clearer, he saw that the eventual independence of India was assured by the march of the Forces of which he became aware, that Britain would be forced by the insistence of India's demands and the pressure of international events to concede independence and that she was already moving towards that eventuality with whatever

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opposition and reluctance. He felt that there would be no need of armed insurrection and that the secret preparation for it could be dropped without injury to the nationalist cause, although the revolutionary spirit had to be maintained and would be maintained intact. His personal intervention in politics would therefore be no longer indispensable. For the sake of his spiritual work he kept his Ashram also free from all political action.

Yet Sri Aurobindo has always been taking a very keen interest in the affairs of the world and especially in the fate of India; he has kept himself in constant touch with them, but of course in his own way; and intervened, whenever necessary, to help or heal with his spiritual force. The aim of his Yoga is not only to realise the Divine beyond and attain to the highest spiritual consciousness, but also to take up all life and all world activity into the scope of the spiritual consciousness and action and to base them on the truth of the Spirit and invest them with a spiritual meaning. Hence the necessity of his keeping watch over

the various activities of man all over the world. At first he limited his spiritual force only to a particular field of his work but afterwards he enlarged his orbit and began to act directly upon the world forces.

Of the two occasions when he used his force and also publicly expressed his views, one was the Second World War during which he said in unequivocal terms that Hitler and his Nazism represented dark Asuric forces, that their success would mean the enslavement of mankind to the tyranny of evil, a definite set-back to the course of evolution and especially to the spiritual evolution of mankind and that it would lead also to the enslavement not only of Europe but also of Asia, and therefore of India, and the undoing of all the work that had been done for the latter's liberation. It was for this reason that Sri Aurobindo supported the Cripps' offer, because by its acceptance India and Britain could have stood united against the Asuric forces and the solution offered by Cripps could have been used as a step towards complete independence. The

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annihilation of Hitler and Nazism, and the fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo's previsions about the future of India are today facts that prove beyond doubt the victory of the spiritual force, of that Light which India ever enshrines in her soul and of which Sri Aurobindo today is the Master-Seer.

It is this Light which will also bring about the unity of India as the first necessary step to the ultimate unity of the entire world. Indeed, Sri Aurobindo's work for India's regeneration has not yet stopped. Faced as she has been since the very birth of her freedom with various problems the complexity of which seems to baffle the best human intellects, she requires the only unerring guidance possible, and that guidance can only be given by one who is always living in the Light. In the past, as is well known, in every walk of her life not excluding the political, India has always been led by her saints and seers acting behind the thrones of even her mightiest kings and emperors. At this moment we are thrice blessed that we have in our midst such

a source to guide her destiny aright. Do not the recent messages of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo—published in this little book—point to that?

In 1922 in the course of his reply to a letter from Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das, Sri Aurobindo wrote: "I see more and more manifestly that man can never get out of the futile circle the race is always treading until he has raised himself on to a new foundation. I believe also that it is the mission of India to make this great victory for the world. But what precisely was the nature of the dynamic power of this great consciousness, what was the condition of its effective truth? How could it be brought down, mobilised, organised, turned upon life? How could our present instruments, intellect, mind, life, body be made true and perfect channels for this great transformation? This was the problem I have been trying to work out in my own experience and I have now a sure basis, a wider knowledge and mastery of the secret." This dynamic power is the creative Force of God, the Light

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of the Supreme, which was glimpsed by the Vedic Seers and which was to come down on earth and new-create man into a divine perfection, or rather to manifest the divinity which is already there in him, because that is his inevitable destiny for the attainment of which Nature in him has been in constant travail. India has stood through the ages to prepare herself and the world for this ultimate end of man's terrestrial existence. All her past endeavours are so many milestones on her path to that glorious consummation. Sri Aurobindo today has seen the Supramental Light, as he calls it, seen it in all its infinite plenitude, in all its supernal splendour, and felt its invincible power of transformation and new creation.

Conditions in the world today show that the earth is becoming more and more ready for this Light to come down on it and be active in its consciousness and evolve out of man the Superman, even as man has evolved out of the animal. Indeed there are also signs of its coming. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, calls upon man to wake up from his agelong sleep

in the Ignorance and lift up his eyes to catch the first golden glints of the descending glory. The descent of this new Light on earth, he says, would mean the beginning of the ascent of man from his present life of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering to the supramental existence of Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda. This is the new world, the 'age of Gold', of which Sri Aurobindo dreamt in his childhood. This is the spiritual end of the political beginning, as foreseen by him when he was the leader of the Nationalist movement. This again will be the accomplishment of the work which he has been sent by God to do on earth by the power of that Knowledge, of that Light which is decreed to bring to birth 'a new heaven and a new earth.' And in this way will India rise to the zenith of her freedom and greatness of which Sri Aurobindo spoke in his early political writings.

To reveal this Truth to man and to show him the Way to its realisation is the spiritual mission for which India has lived throughout

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the ages and which she fulfils today through her greatest son. This is the final phase of Sri Aurobindo's work of which the earlier part was directed to the political freedom of India without which his spiritual work could not have been secure and fruitful.

It is no mere chance coincidence that Sri Aurobindo's birthday, the fifteenth of August, should synchronise with the day of India's political emancipation. It is a day of that supreme victory for India which will crown her with the leadership of mankind. And history will record it as one of its decisive turning-points, a landmark, an ever-memorable day on which a great country got back its right to live, grow and fulfil itself as a free nation. And may we not read in it the divine dispensation that India should attain her independence on the day on which was born the one who initiated the struggle for that glorious goal and by his spiritual force helped forward its achievement and who stands today heralding the dawn of a yet greater glory, the dawn on earth of a new age of the Spirit, whose

first rays will burst upon India in a stupendous spiritual awakening? Thus will this holy land be once again the centre of a new movement for world-transformation. That is why the Seer of today is also the Bringer of the Light who affirms the Vedic *rik*:

“Arise, O Souls, arise! Strength has come,
Darkness has passed away—the Light is
arriving.”

APPENDIX

THE TRUE ARYAN* AND INDIAN CULTURE

“INTRINSICALLY, in its most fundamental sense, Arya means an effort or an uprising and overcoming. The Aryan is he who strives and overcomes all outside him and within him that stands opposed to the human advance. Self-conquest is the first law of his nature. He overcomes earth and the body and does not consent like ordinary men to their dullness, inertia, dead routine and tamasic limitations. He overcomes life and its energies and refuses to be dominated by their hungers and cravings or enslaved by their rajasic passions. He overcomes the mind and its habits, he does not live in a shell of ignorance, inherited preju-

* Sri Aurobindo: *Views and Reviews*, 2nd edn., pp. 7-10.

dices, customary ideas, pleasant opinions, but knows how to seek and choose, to be large and flexible in intelligence even as he is firm and strong in his will. For in everything he seeks truth, in everything right, in everything height and freedom.

“Self-perfection is the aim of his self-conquest. Therefore what he conquers he does not destroy, but ennobles and fulfils. He knows that the body, life and mind are given him in order to attain to something higher than they; therefore they must be transcended and overcome, their limitations denied, their absorption of their gratifications rejected. But he knows also that the Highest is something which is no nullity in the world, but increasingly expresses itself here,—a divine Will, Consciousness, Love, Beatitude which pours itself out, when found, through the terms of the lower life on the finder and on all in his environment that is capable of receiving it. Of that he is the servant, lover and seeker. When it is attained, he pours it forth in work, love, joy and knowledge upon mankind. For

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always the Aryan is a worker and warrior. He spares himself no labour of mind or body whether to seek the Highest or to serve it. He avoids no difficulty, he accepts no cessation from fatigue. Always he fights for the coming of that kingdom within himself and in the world.

“The Aryan perfected is the Arhat. There is a transcendent Consciousness which surpasses the universe and of which all these worlds are only a side-issue and a by-play. To that consciousness he aspires and attains. There is a Consciousness which, being transcendent, is yet the universe and all that the universe contains. Into that consciousness he enlarges his limited ego; he becomes one with all beings and all inanimate objects in a single self-awareness, love, delight, all-embracing energy. There is a consciousness which, being both transcendental and universal, yet accepts the apparent limitations of individuality for work, for various standpoints of knowledge, for the play of the Lord with His creations; for the ego is there that it may

finally convert itself into a free centre of divine work and the divine play. That consciousness too he has sufficient love, joy and knowledge to accept; he is puissant enough to effect that conversion. To embrace individuality after transcending it is the last and divine sacrifice. The perfect Arhat is he who is able to live simultaneously in all these three apparent states of existence, elevate the lower into the higher, receive the higher into the lower, so that he represents perfectly in the symbols of the world that with which he is identified in all parts of his being,—the triple and triune Brahman.”

This is the ideal for which India has stood through the ages and for the attainment of which she evolved a culture based on the purpose and perfectibility of man's life on earth. The inner and therefore the true and real meaning of Indian culture lies in its idea of life not to be lived for its own sake but for the development of the spirit in man to its widest and highest possibilities. It regards life as a movement of the Eternal in time, of the Uni-

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versal in the individual, of the Infinite in the finite, of the Divine in man. The vision came to the seers of India that man can become not only conscious of the Eternal and the Infinite, but can live in the power of that Consciousness and universalise, spiritualise, divinise himself by that Force. They held that the aim of man's life was to grow by an inner and outer experience till he could live in God, realise his spirit, become divine in knowledge, in will and in the joy of his being. This is the deeper intention, the dominant motive of all the creative strivings of India. A divine perfection has always been her ultimate objective. And it was this ideal, the ideal of attaining the perfect state of Aryahood as envisaged above, that India has ever endeavoured to fulfil in the life of the race and in the life as well of the entire humanity. That is why our ancient fathers have voiced forth, ringing through the ages, their solemn call: *krinvantu vishvan aryam*, 'Aryanise the whole world.' Needless to emphasise that this is a call vibrant with their hopes, aspirations and blessings, charged with the weight and force of their colossal sadhana, confided to the

succeeding generations as the *mantra* of their life to realise. At this critical but at the same time propitious hour, when the world stands definitely at the cross-roads, faced with the crucial choice of the way of heaven, *amritam*, or the way away from it, *vinasham*, the call is being sounded afresh with redoubled notes by that one person in the world who typifies in himself the culture of the past and present and of that which will dominate the future. To the sum-total of this culture is super-added his own unique, unprecedented achievement and contribution. It is this that so easily gives him the position of the Divine Guide to a distressed world heading momentarily towards its destruction. Will the call be heard or will Nature be suffered to exact her inevitable price?

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